

THE
GENTLEMAN'S
COMPANION TO THE TOILET,
OR A
TREATISE ON SHAVING;

COMPRISING,
NECESSARY INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PROPER USE OF RAZORS, AS
WELL AS FULL DIRECTIONS FOR STROPPING, SETTING, AND
PRESERVING THEM IN GOOD ORDER;
WITH SOME REMARKS ON SHAVING SOAPS, AND THE SORT BEST
ADAPTED FOR GENERAL USE.

BY A
LONDON HAIR-DRESSER.

London :

PUBLISHED BY W. STRANGE,
21, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1844.

[*Price One Shilling.*]

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P R E F A C E.

THERE have been several publications which have professed to give instructions in the art of shaving, but they have all evidently been written by cutlers, razor-makers, &c., and have been more calculated to puff off the articles manufactured by their authors, than to convey any useful information upon the subject; indeed, their remarks have been worse than worthless, and it was the ridiculous nature of some of these, that first suggested to the author the necessity of the present little work.

To remove the beard pleasantly and expeditiously, (two very desirable things,) the razor requires to be held in a certain position, and moved in a certain direction, and if that is not attended to, the best razor that was ever made will not cut smoothly. The author has endeavoured, in as

clear a manner as possible, to give these instructions in the following pages, and he flatters himself they will be found of much service, more especially to those who have hard beards and tender faces.

A good razor improperly used will cut much worse than a bad one in the hands of an experienced operator. Many persons, therefore, suffer much pain and inconvenience, because they are unacquainted with the proper method of using it, and the razor is often found fault with when the difficulty arises from their own awkwardness in handling it. The reader is informed of every method which the author has found, from a twenty years' experience, to be the best, and as he is, amongst his friends, allowed to excel in this part of his business, he trusts his remarks will be found not entirely valueless by those who will adopt his suggestions.

London, April 4th, 1844.

THE GENTLEMAN'S
COMPANION TO THE TOILET.

CUSTOMS OF VARIOUS NATIONS WITH REGARD
TO THE BEARD.

THE first account we have of the beard being shaven, is given in the history of the earlier ages. It was at that time cut off as a punishment for certain offences against the law ; and it was then considered a punishment of a most ignominious character. What was considered a punishment then, is adopted for cleanliness, comfort, and appearance now ; and a long beard would look equally as disagreeable and ridiculous at the present day, as at that time it used to be considered disgraceful to be without one. Science had not then made much improvements in edged tools ; the beard was then removed, no doubt, with some rude instrument, which must have inflicted the most excruciating torments upon the poor wretches who underwent the operation.

The practices of different nations, with regard to the management of the beard, is both curious and amusing.

In New Spain, they pluck out their beards, and afterwards bathe their chins with a liquid, to prevent its growing again. The Maldives shave the upper and lower lip, because they would on no account touch a hair before or during the time they are eating or drinking. The inhabitants of the Cape of Good Hope eradicate their beards, and paint their chins various colours. In Mexico, the men have no beards, it being pulled as soon as it appears; they believe they are more comely without. In India, there are men who train their beards to grow like the whiskers of a cat. The natives of Virginia shave half their beards away, the other half is as nature produces it. The Germans, formerly, wore their beards so long, that they sometimes touched the ground; and the Grecians considered a long beard a solemn sign of a philosopher. In Cathea, the men dye their beards all sorts of colours. Among the Jews, it was reckoned ignominious to shave a person's beard. In the province of Hez, which is under the dominion of the Emperor of Morocco, the single men are not allowed to wear their beards, by which the single and married men are easily distinguished.

Some of the earlier Kings of France wore their beards adorned with gold and pearls; and Chrysostom says that the Kings of Persia had their beards plaited with gold threads.

The day on which the young men among the Greeks

and Romans first shaved their beards, was a festival; visits of ceremony were then paid, and they received presents from their friends,

It was not till the 454th year after the foundation of Rome, that the world began to entertain barbers. The first that we hear of was brought into Italy from Sicily, by P. Ticens Mena, about that time, and it was not till then that they cut their hair and shaved their beards. The first who was shaven every day was Scipio Africanus, and after him the Emperor Augustus, who ever after used the razor. Formerly, women used to shave, and amongst the most celebrated were the five women barbers of Drury Lane, one of whom was mother to Ann Clarges, subsequently a Duchess. Whatever the customs of other nations may be with respect to the beard, we sober-plodding Englishmen have but one, which is, to shave it as closely, as pleasantly, and as quickly as we possibly can. Any remarks, therefore, that can facilitate this almost daily and universal operation cannot be either ill-timed, or out of place.

THE PROPER WAY OF USING THE RAZOR, TO MAKE IT
CUT EASY AND PLEASANT.

Some persons possess such hard beards and tender faces, that even an expert hair-dresser finds great difficulty in shaving them without giving considerable pain; if, therefore, a man, having had great practical

experience, find a difficulty in removing the beard pleasantly, it is no wonder gentlemen are puzzled in performing the same operation for themselves. The object of the present little work is to remove that difficulty, by pointing out the sort of razor required, the best method of stropping, setting, and keeping it in good order, and also the only proper way of using it.

Enclosed within the outside cover of a celebrated razor-strop paste, are the following printed directions for shaving* :—" Never use warm water, which makes a tender face. Place the razor in your pocket, or under your arm, to warm it." It is not possible for

* The reader will bear in mind that these remarks are not made with a view of injuring the sale of the article which is enclosed in this printed absurdity, for if the maker knew from experience the ridiculous instructions he has given, and the injury it must consequently inflict upon the article he is vending, he would thank the author for pointing out the error to the public, and by that means giving it fair play in the market—its own merits would then more properly recommend itself to the favour of the public. The paper in question would probably not have been named at all, but the article has obtained a great celebrity, and the instructions are considered by many gentlemen an authority. I know it is the custom for cutlers to recommend cold water to be used instead of hot, I therefore attribute no more blame, or ignorance of the subject, to the author of this paper, than I do to others of the same trade; but knowing, from a daily experience of more than twenty years, how ill-calculated cold water is either to soften the beard or improve the edge of the razor, I have frequently been astonished to see with what pertinacity many persons adhere to the system, because they considered the name of a respectable cutler, razor maker, or razor-strop maker, an authority for its correctness; when they could, at any time they were shaving, without the least trouble, convince themselves of its impropriety. The matter does not admit of a doubt, I therefore unhesitatingly recommend hot water as the best, for making the operation of shaving easy and pleasant.

any man to write greater rubbish, Nothing can be recommended more calculated to prevent persons shaving themselves pleasantly, than cold water, except a very blunt razor. Hot water (not warm) is as necessary in shaving as a good razor: it assists the edge very much; it does not make the face tender, but has a very contrary effect; in fact, there are many gentlemen with such wiry beards that they would find it an utter impossibility to shave without hot water; or if they did accomplish it, it would be after many pulls and scratches, such as few persons would be willing to repeat. "Place the razor under the arm, or in your pocket, to warm it." This is an apology for the hot water, and, by that, the writer allows that heat improves the edge: he is perfectly right there—heat does improve the edge; but not such heat as can be obtained by placing the razor under the arm, or in the pocket; besides, how long must it be kept under the arm before it is even moderately warmed? and if heat improves the edge, it must evidently be by the expansion of the metal; the greater heat, therefore, that is given to the blade, the more the metal is expanded, and it therefore follows that the edge is improved in proportion to the quantity of heat given to it. Now, this necessary heat can be obtained in no other way than by dipping the razor frequently in hot water during the time of shaving.

The cause of this improvement has certainly been a

matter of dispute ; but it is a well-known fact that the edge is much improved by the use of hot water. Some persons have contended that the expansion of the metal is the cause. Others have asserted that the particles of dirt, soap, &c., which collect between the teeth of the razor, being removed by the hot water, is the cause. There is no doubt that both have something to do with it, but the expansion of the steel is evidently the principal cause, for the hotter the water the better the razor will cut ; but if it is suffered to cool before it is used, the hot water will have done it no service, and it will be necessary to heat it again before it is restored to the same good cutting order. Some London hair-dressers invariably place the razor in the hot water during the time of lathering ; by this means the blade is thoroughly heated by the time it is wanted, and will probably not get cold during the time of shaving. This will save time and trouble. If the reader adopt this method (and it is a very good one), he must take care not to place the blade too far in the water, for, if it is very hot, the heel, near the handle, will have become too hot for the fingers.

The object of lathering with hot water is to soften the beard, which cold water will not do, and if the reader will one day shave with hot water, and the next day with cold, he will mark the difference, and will find the author's assertions borne out by facts. So far from hot water making the face tender, he will find cold

water will do that more effectually, especially if he goes into the air on a frosty morning, immediately after shaving. Besides, by softening the beard, it can not only be removed more pleasantly, but in much less time.

Cold water should never be used ; in winter it will frequently chap the face very much, and when this occurs the best razor will always give much pain, and sometimes the face will be completely excoriated by the operation. The beard must always be well lathered, more particularly if it is strong, or wiry, or the face very tender ; this must never be omitted, for unless it is properly softened by lathering, it will neither shave so easily nor so close. In lathering, most persons hold the handle of the brush with the tips of their fingers, and very little more than dab the beard with the end of it. This method of using it will do very little good. The best way is to get the handle of the brush in the hand firm, rub the face hard with it, and the brush will spread, and continue rubbing in that way till the beard is sufficiently softened to shave easily. Another practice which many persons are accustomed to is, to work up the lather till it has got to the consistence of paste, before they apply it to the face. This is a very bad practice, and should always be avoided ; however hot the water may be, the lather is cold, and it is too thick to soften the beard, which is the only object of lathering : the only proper way is

to put the lather on as thin and as hot as possible, and by rubbing with the brush, it will work up to a proper consistence, but a fuller explanation may be found under the head of "Shaving Soaps."

Shaving brushes made of badger's hair are the best for this purpose, they are very soft, and will make a better lather than any other; but if a brush is used which is hard, and the points unground, that is if the points are blunt and stiff, it will so irritate the skin of a tender face as to cause that smarting sensation which is often felt after shaving, and sometimes the face will actually bleed from the friction of such brush. In describing the manner of using the razor it is necessary for the author to be explicit, for the best razor used in an improper manner, will always give pain, more or less, according to the method of using it, and the face and beard it is used upon; and the beard will never be shaved clean off. The razor must never be held tight; if it is nipped between the fingers it will not "cut free" (that is the professional term, and no doubt it is sufficiently intelligible for the reader to understand.) It should be held as lightly as possible. The best, in fact the only proper way, is to place the first three fingers on one side, and the thumb and the little finger on the other. When you shave, pull the skin quite tight with the left hand, in the very opposite direction to that in which you are shaving; this will present an even surface, and by throwing out the beard, will enable you to shave it

clean off without cutting the face ; the left hand must follow the razor. Many persons wring their faces into all sorts of shapes to get the skin tight ; this must never be attempted. By this means you get a very hard surface to shave upon, and the least tremor in the hand, or false movement in any way, will cause you to cut the face, and sometimes deeply too, if you are not very careful. Much depends upon the skin being held tight, but if it is drawn in an improper direction it would have been quite as well, or perhaps better, had it not been meddled with. The skin, be it observed, must be both tight and smooth, to enable the razor to cut pleasantly, and as the following directions are strictly correct for this purpose, the reader need not be told that any infringement of them must be wrong.

When you shave from the ear on the left side to the point of the chin, you must place the fingers of the left hand immediately behind the razor, and draw the skin backwards in a straight line with the jawbone, then on the right side, from the end of the chin to the ear, pulling the skin from the ear towards the chin. The left hand must follow close behind the razor. By this means you get a smooth surface, there will be no danger of cutting the face, and if the razor is in good order, the beard will be removed in a very agreeable manner. But if instead of following these directions, the reader in shaving himself from the side of the face to the chin, draw the skin upwards, or in any other way (except in

the way directed) in a careless indifferent manner, he will find the same razor which before shaved him pleasantly will give him great pain, and if he think it worth his while to try the experiment he will find these remarks not entirely valueless. The same observations will apply to any other part of the face. When the under lip is shaved, it is best to hold the chin with the two fore-fingers of the left hand, pulling it down so as to get the skin tight, the razor must then be held lightly in the hand with the point raised much higher than the heel, and by a free movement of the wrist the beard should be cut upwards. By holding the point of the razor highest in shaving the under lip, the reader will observe that the same slanting movement is given to it that is directed to make the razor cut smoothly, the wrist only must be moved, it is not only, not necessary to use the elbow-joint, but very improper. Many persons draw the under lip tight round the teeth. The beard will cut much harder that way. It will take a much longer time, and the lip will be very liable to be cut, and the beard cannot be shaved clean unless it is lathered three or four times. If the chin is held in the way described, it will slightly yield to a gentle pressure of the razor, and this it should be remembered is requisite, for if a hard surface is presented to the edge, such a one as drawing the lips tight round the teeth, which is a very common practice, the hand must be remarkably steady to enable you to get through the operation without cutting the face.

In shaving the upper lip, the end of the nose must be held a little upwards with the fingers of the left hand; this will draw the skin so as to enable the centre of the lip to be shaved, as well as the right side. On the left side, press the finger on the cheek at the bottom of the lip, or rather at the corner of the mouth; but at a sufficient distance from the razor to allow its being used. Pull the lip down, and shave in a slanting direction towards the nose. If the beard grow close in the corners of the mouth, and it frequently does so amongst elderly persons, the mouth had better be slightly opened, and the corners shaved either downwards or upwards, according to the convenience of the operator himself; or if the beard grow much on the edge of the lip, near the mouth, it is very annoying, unless it be shaved clean, more particularly if it be strong and wiry, in that case the finger had better be placed on the edge of the lip at or near the corner of the mouth, and pulled hard so as to throw out the edge of the lip; by this means the beard is easily got at, which is the only difficulty gentlemen experience in shaving this part without cutting. Having disposed of the other part of the face, the next remarks must be directed to the throat. If a fat person, it will be requisite to place the left hand on the edge of the jaw-bone on the right side, and draw the skin upwards, and shave from the jaw to the bottom of the throat, but on the left side it will be more convenient to shave upwards, and then of course it will be neces-

sary to place the left hand behind the razor as before, and the skin tightened by drawing it down ; but a thin person need nothing more than raise the chin, and that will tighten the skin sufficiently to shave on either side without the use of the left hand.

Sometimes at the bottom of the beard on the throat, it will be exceedingly hard and stubborn, and cannot be shaved without drawing blood. When this occurs it will be advisable to try it both upwards and downwards too, and it will be immediately seen which is the best way.

If the beard be hard and wiry it is always necessary to lather a second time ; the face must not be scraped without the lather. It spoils the edge of the razor ; makes the face tender, and the beard cannot be shaved so close, and if the reader has a tender skin it will smart for hours afterwards, but if he shave every day and suffer much pain from the operation, in that case it will not be proper to shave more than once over, for a second time, under such circumstances, sometimes draws blood more especially if the face is the least chapped, or at all inclined to be scorbutic.

After being sharpened on the hone, the razor frequently has got a very wiry edge, it takes the beard close without much trouble, but causes a smarting scratching pain in doing it. This may occasionally be removed by drawing the edge once or twice across the thumb nail, and stropping it afterwards on a good soft strop, but if

that is not sufficient, draw it two or three times lightly across the back of a comb, and again strop it, and this will generally take off that sharpness, then dip it in hot water, and strop it on the hand, and there is no doubt it will then be smooth enough to shave pleasantly with if the razor is a good one. But should this prove ineffectual, let it be set again upon the hone, for depend upon it nothing else will do. If you can get such a razor to work well, it generally continues on a good edge a long time afterwards.

In shaving from the ear, or whisker (if there be any) to the point of the chin, the heel of the razor must be held higher than the point, to allow you to cut the beard in an oblique direction, and if you should find it cut hard, and give you much pain, raise the heel still higher, and that will often make it cut much easier. By this means you will more readily discover the proper method of using the razor, and a quick and easy way of shaving yourself, for the same method must always be adopted. When the razor is applied to the face it must neither be laid too flat, nor the back be raised too much; in the one case it will pass over a great portion of the beard without cutting it off, (or if the razor is made very hot as before recommended by hot water) it will burn the face. In the other it will so fret the skin and hurt the face that shaving will be far from an agreeable operation, and independant of this, the danger of cutting the face is so great that you must have a very

steady hand to enable you to finish without drawing blood. I shall perhaps be better understood when I say the back must be raised from the face about ten or twelve degrees.

In a pamphlet, published about fifty years since, entitled, a "Treatise on Razors," the author (who was a cutler) says, "The razor should be applied to the skin in a flat position, and with a very small degree of pressure." And to substantiate the correctness of his opinion, he says in the next page, "The reader will recollect that when the hair is removed from the lower part of his cheek, the sensation is less unpleasant than when it is removed from the upper lip;" meaning, of course, that the nose prevents you laying the razor flat enough to shave it as easily as the lower part of the face. Now every hair-dresser well knows that, in nineteen persons out of twenty, the upper lip is very tender compared to any other part of the face, and knowing this, the trade generally dip the razor in hot water, and give it a quick strop on the hand or strop, before shaving the upper lip, and it would be of great service if the upper lip is rubbed with the end of the finger, for as it is awkward to get at with the brush, the finger will assist in softening the beard, and, therefore, it can be shaved much easier. With regard to the pressure required on the razor, which is recommended in this pamphlet,* the

* This pamphlet would not have been alluded to, but an edition (purporting to be the twelfth) having been recently published,

reader can soon convince himself of the absurdity of such a recommendation. No pressure at all is required, and instead of pressing on the razor, the object should be to let it touch the face as lightly as possible; if the edge touch the skin, that is sufficient,—for, if it is in good cutting order, it will take off the beard properly without the least pressure. If the razor is used with a heavy hand, it will never cut smooth and comfortable, and if upon a tender face it will give much pain, and sometimes cause a smarting sensation a long time after shaving, and if there is the slightest pimple, or other protuberance, on the face, it will be sure to take them off, a very disagreeable affair, which may be avoided by drawing the skin tight as before directed, and using the razor as lightly as possible. Try this plan, and you will soon be convinced of its impropriety. In shaving a stiff hard beard, it is necessary to take short smooth strokes with the razor; long ones will not do, the last part of the stroke, when the heel of the razor comes in contact with the beard, will cut hard and disagreeable. On a soft, light beard, a long, smooth, gentle stroke is proper, and will enable you to get through the operation quickly; but the razor must, in all cases, be used in an oblique direction, from point to heel. A razor cuts upon precisely the same principle as a carpenter's saw; in fact, it is a saw, but of a very

the author has thought it necessary to correct some of the errors which it contains.

fine description, and every body knows that a saw would not cut unless it was used from point to heel in the same way as the razor is directed to be used. If a razor is held in the hand perpendicularly during the time of shaving, it will pull the beard without cutting, and this is the cause frequently of gentlemen suffering such excruciating pain from the razor, either by themselves, or when it is used by an inexperienced tonsor. The two following anecdotes will sufficiently illustrate this fact, and at once shew the necessity of following the instructions which are here given with regard to the use of the razor.

The author was one day shaving a gentleman who had a very tender face, with a razor which had a very good edge, the gentleman was praising the razor, and stated that if all hair-dressers kept their razors in that order, shaving would be a pleasant operation instead of a painful one. The author immediately said that much, and sometimes more depended upon the manner of using it than the edge itself, this he seemed much to doubt, and said that the one in question was in such good order that use it how you would, it would still cut well; an offer was immediately made to prove the contrary if he would allow the experiment to be made on his own face, to which, after a few more words, he consented, the position of the razor was altered, and instead of cutting the beard in a slanting direction it was drawn straight across the face, he immediately jumped up holding his

face with both hands, exclaiming “ you have cut me severely,” and it was not till he had examined it in the glass that he was convinced, it was not cut, and that he had been in error with regard to the unerring qualities of the razor. This razor, therefore, which cut so well when used in a proper manner as to call forth his commendations, would not cut at all when used in an improper manner.

The next is that of a lady who was suffering great pain from the sting of a wasp which had recently stung her arm; happening to be there in my professional capacity, I offered to take out the sting with the razor if she would consent to the operation, explaining to her at the same time how it would be accomplished. After the persuasion of her friends and many assurances on my part that she would receive no injury from the razor, she allowed me to proceed, I then placed the thumb of my left hand on the arm and drew the skin as far backward as I could get it, this tightened it and threw out the end of the sting enough for me to get hold of it with the edge of a sharp razor. I then very carefully pushed the razor straight across the wound, the sting was extracted and the pain very shortly after ceased. Had the razor been used in an oblique direction, the quick succession of its fine teeth would have cut off that part of the sting which was above the skin, and left the other in the flesh, but being drawn straight, the teeth fixed themselves in it and pulled the other part with it ; so it

was with the gentleman who fancied his face cut, the razor cut exceedingly well while it was used in a slanting direction, but no sooner had it been reversed and pushed straight across the face than it pulled the beard instead of cutting it, and the pain which the sudden twitch occasioned made him believe I had cut him. After this explanation the reader will no doubt see the necessity of using the razor in the manner I have described, but if he should remain doubtful, let me invite him to try both ways upon his own face, and I fear not the result of his investigation. A practical knowledge as I have before observed is the most perfect, and if the result of his experiment be in my favour he can no longer hesitate to adopt my suggestions. The razor had better not be opened too wide, but it must be opened far enough, or otherwise it will be very awkward to handle, and difficult to get the slanting stroke I have advised. It will be impossible to say what is far enough, or what is too far, for different parts of the face require different positions of the handle, it must therefore be left to the reader's own judgment, and if he follow my other directions he cannot do very wrong in this respect.

I will now proceed to point out the description of razor most suitable for general use.

WEIGHT, SHAPE, AND QUALITY, OF RAZORS.

There are three things to be observed in the purchase of a razor, and these are weight, shape, and quality.

With respect to the weight of razors there are various

opinions, both among the public in general, and those who are engaged in the manufacture or sale of them, but there cannot be two opinions amongst hair-dressers, and the seller or maker I allow to be no judge, and therefore their opinion is not worth cultivating. Many persons have contended that the weight of a razor must depend, like every other edged tool, entirely upon the degree of resistance it will meet with, and a large heavy razor is very necessary to shave a very hard beard. This is one of the fallacies advanced by cutlers and razor-makers. A large unwieldy razor is a very improper instrument, they will be found very awkward to use, and the pressure which is made upon the face with them, and which cannot be avoided, will be found very painful on a stiff beard. The best sized razor, and the one most likely to suit all beards, is one that will weigh about one ounce and a half, or an ounce and three quarters ; one with an edge about three inches long, if of a moderate thickness, will be about this weight. If any of my readers have accustomed themselves to larger ones, I would advise them to discontinue their use, and although they may find lighter ones more difficult to handle at first, they will see that difficulty soon leave them, and they will be well rewarded for a little perseverance.

The shape of a razor is the next thing to be considered ; the shape of almost all modern made razors is straight, and experience tells me this shape to be the

best with the point, a little rounded, to prevent its cutting or scratching, but as there are some made and sold with a considerable curve, I would particularly caution my readers against the purchase of any such article. In setting them they can scarcely ever be got to an even edge, for when the point cuts, the heel will not; and on the other hand, when the heel cuts, the point does not, and with such an edge I need not say they are not in a fit state to shave properly. There is the same difficulty in stropping, the strop can never be got to bear on the heel and point with the same stroke of the razor; besides they are so awkward that the strop will be cut, so as to render it useless in a very short time, unless more than ordinary care is taken to avoid it.

It is somewhat difficult to give infallible instructions for the choice of a good razor, razor-makers themselves are puzzled in distinguishing a good from a bad blade when finished. The excellence of a razor depends upon the quality of the steel it is manufactured from, and the process of tempering it; if manufactured from the best material it may be too hard or too soft, and this entirely depends upon the nice judgment of the workman. If, for instance, the blade be too hot when it is immersed in water, its grain will be very coarse, but if it is of a proper heat it will be perfectly fine and smooth. Again, if in tempering it, it receive not a sufficient degree of heat, it will be too brittle; if the heat be more

than sufficient, it will be too soft and yielding. If the razor be too hard, it will not receive that fine edge which is requisite to shave well, for if a fine edge is obtained, it will fly off when applied to a hard wiry beard, or if too soft it will turn before the beard, and will pass over it without cutting it. It is best when one is required, to apply to a seller that can be depended upon; pay a fair price, and expect a good article in return. Three shillings is enough for a plain black handled razor, but if a fancy handle is required, they may be had up to any amount, though not a better blade. In making a purchase, it will be necessary to observe that the handle is tolerably well finished, for a very bad blade is never put into a good handle. If the handle is slovenly finished, there is great doubt about the blade, they are generally what the trade call "wasters," that is, blades which are spoiled in the tempering, or have some other incurable defect, and are almost entirely useless. They are put into cheap handles, and sold for any price they will fetch, sometimes not more than four or five shillings per gross. The state of the edge may be known at the time of buying, by drawing it lightly across the thumb nail, when if it is uneven or notched in the slightest degree it will be discovered, and if the edge be tried on the skin of the thick part of the hand, it will soon be seen if it has a keen one.

RAZOR STROPS AND THE MANNER OF USING THEM.

A great deal may be said upon this subject, but as my object is to instruct the reader, without entering into a great deal of irrelevant matter for the purpose of spinning a long yarn, and making a more expensive book I shall condense my observations into as small a space as possible. In the first place the strop must be a flat one ; there are some oval ones and strongly recommended by the maker, as an improvement upon the old-fashioned flat ones, but I would strongly advise either their purchase or their use ; they are highly improper, and are by no means calculated to answer the purpose for which strops are intended, viz., to preserve a smooth keen edge ; no other strop will do this so effectually as a flat one made of two or three thicknesses of very fine calf skin, this thickness will present a firm but slightly yielding surface to the edge of the razor. It is not necessary to have what is called a smoothing side, one side for stropping is all that is necessary, and if this be kept in proper order as hereafter directed that will both smooth and preserve the edge as much as it is possible for a razor strop to do.

A good strop is a very necessary appendage to the dressing case, for without one a good razor can never be kept on a fine keen edge for any length of time if used upon a very hard beard. Great care must be taken to

preserve a smooth even surface, for when it has become notched it is no longer fit for use, nor must it be allowed to get hard, or to collect any portion of grit; in either case it will injure the edge; to prevent this it must occasionally be lightly scraped with the back of a pair of scissors or a blunt knife to get off the old composition, or any portion of dirt it has collected, and a small portion of grease applied to soften the leather afterwards. When it is well soaked in, a small portion of composition may be spread evenly over and rubbed well down with a small phial, or some other similar substance before the razor is applied. You must then lay the razor flat on the strop in an oblique direction, and draw it from heel to point from one end of the strop to the other, pressing equally on the back and edge. You need not take the razor off the strop, but turn it on the back and bring it back again in the same way as before. Some persons recommend the razor to be stropped from point to heel, but this, like many other fallacies which I have pointed out, cannot emanate from any other persons but those who are entirely ignorant of the subject. All razors are drawn from heel to point when set upon the hone, and the teeth are fixed in a certain position by the action of the stone upon the edge, and a soft hone, by causing greater friction, will produce the keenest and smoothest edge, if of a fine grain. It must, therefore, be self-evident, that the action of the strop will not produce sufficient friction to reverse the teeth of the razor;

and consequently stropping it the contrary way, must injure rather than improve the edge. The composition, which is placed upon the strop, is intended to rub up the points of the teeth, so as to make the razor cut smoothly; but it will do nothing more than this, for when the teeth are worn down by use, it will require the hone to bring it up to good cutting order again. Those gentlemen who have adopted this method of stropping the razors, had better correct the error as soon as possible; and the pleasure of shaving with a smooth cutting razor afterwards will compensate them for the little trouble it has cost them. Besides injuring the edge, stropping from point to heel has other objections; it is a very slow way of performing the operation, and the state of those gentlemen's strops, who have accustomed themselves to this plan, will bear me out in my assertion, when I say that it is a sure way of cutting them to pieces, and, therefore, rendering them useless.

There is another equally objectionable method of stropping, and that is, drawing the razor straight from one end of the strop to the other. This is an error which nine out of ten persons, who shave themselves, are guilty of. If the teeth of the razor were perfectly straight, instead of standing in an oblique direction towards the point of the razor, this method would certainly be correct; but as they are not so placed, they require a corresponding method of stropping. Another objection also which this plan is liable to, is the impos-

sibility of the strop acting alike upon all parts of the edge.

Having said thus much upon the subject, I think I have embraced every thing which will be either interesting or instructive to my readers, and recommending them to follow my advice, I will proceed to point out the best method of setting them.

THE HONE AND THE MANNER OF USING IT.

I have before said that the hone is necessary when the teeth of the razor are worn down by use or any other cause ; the strop only renovates the teeth, but the hone, by rubbing certain parts of the steel away, will produce new ones. Some razor strop makers contend that the hone is not necessary where a good strop is used ; I shall be able to shew my readers that this assertion is not founded on facts ; it is a mere puff to increase the sale of the articles they manufacture. Choice must be made of a hone of a very fine grain, soft and smooth, and if the razor be properly managed it will produce a fine smooth edge. Hones which are of a yellowish colour are generally the best, and, if matched with others, the one with the finest grain may be easily distinguished. Having got a good hone, you must see that it has a smooth and even surface, if not, it must be well-rubbed with pumice stone, and a little water till it has one. Having prepared the hone, a few drops of oil must be put on it, and the razor laid in an oblique direction,

and drawn from heel to point from one end of the hone to the other. In stropping, the edge must follow the back of the razor ; but in setting, it is reversed, and the edge must be in front so as to cut the hone. You must press equally on the back and edge, but the amount of pressure must depend entirely on the quality of the hone and the thickness of the edge of the razor you are sharpening. A good soft hone requires but very little pressure on the razor to bring it up to good cutting order, more especially if it has a thin edge ; but a hard hone will require greater pressure and much longer time to bring it to the same perfection. The most proper way is to lay the razor flat on the hone, rub it at first two or three times on one side, then turn it and rub it the same number of times on the other side ; this may be done till it has acquired a wiry edge, which may be known by trying it on the fleshy part of the hand : then draw once down the hone on each side of the razor till it has obtained a keen smooth edge. The razor had better be turned on the back without taking it off the hone ; this method will prevent the edge being injured by striking against it, which it is impossible always to avoid when turned in the opposite direction.

I have said that the razor must be laid flat on the hone, and I have found from long experience, that this method is not merely the best, but the only way to obtain a good and smooth edge ; but there have been others, and I believe there are persons now who contend to the

contrary. Mr. Savigny, who wrote some years ago upon this subject, says, "the manner of setting a razor, as he has frequently heard prescribed, is to apply it flat to the hone, observing that the back and edge touch at the same time; and that surely a man without the assistance of a supernatural genius, may easily perceive that though this may sometimes be a proper direction, it cannot be always so;" and again he says, "the propriety of this method will rarely be found, as it entirely depends upon the thickness of the back being exactly proportioned to the breadth of the razor." This author recommends the back of the razor to be slightly raised from the hone during the setting. It will not require a "supernatural genius" to see the nicety and precision with which this operation must be performed, admitting Mr. Savigny to be correct. The hand would be required to be moved with mechanical regularity, for the least tremor would be sufficient to round the edge so much as to require its being ground: and I will venture to say that the most skilful workman would rarely be able to get a good edge by this method. During my experience, I have rarely found the back of a razor so disproportioned to the breadth as to require any material alteration in the mode of setting, except what are called "concave razors," and these are not worth the trouble of setting. I therefore repeat, without fear of contradiction from any person who is acquainted with the subject, that the only proper method of setting

razors, is to lay them flat on the hone, or, in the words of Mr. Savigny, to "see that the back and edge touch the hone at the same time."

After a razor has been several times sharpened upon the hone, it gets what hair-dressers call a thick edge, and what is generally termed amongst mechanics, a bevelled edge. When this occurs it requires grinding, the hone is not sufficient to produce an edge keen enough to shave pleasantly with.

SHAVING SOAPS.

There are many soaps which are puffed off as "the best article manufactured for shaving"—a "beautiful preparation for softening the beard," &c. &c.; but some of them are utterly worthless. All soaps are to be avoided which contain any considerable portion of alkali; they make a light frothy lather that will not stand on the face, and they will much annoy you by those irritating pains, which are frequently felt after shaving with a bad razor. The soap which I have invariably found to be the best is Naples soap; it produces a beautifully mild creamy lather that will soften the beard, and will render shaving an agreeable operation, and is best calculated to allay those smarting sensations which an indifferent razor produces on a tender skin. There is a great deal of white honey used in the manufacture of Naples soap, and I need not say that there is nothing of a more mild and soothing nature.

This soap has, however, got into disrepute with many persons, and it has been thrown on one side for one of an inferior quality, because they fancied they could not shave themselves so well with that as with one of less price—perhaps not, but after the proper method of using it has been explained, I think they will see that the fault rests with themselves, and not with the inferiority of the article in question. Naples soap requires but very little rubbing with the brush to bring it up to a good lather. It is a general custom to use this soap like others of an inferior sort, and by rubbing the brush hard on the soap, such a thick lather is produced that will not soften the beard at all; the consequence is that the razor cuts hard and painfully, and the soap is discontinued as worthless. Now had the brush been dipped in hot water, and the points lightly rubbed on the soap, and applied to the face while in a very thin state, and worked to a thick lather on the face; the beard would have been softened, and the soap would have held the character which it is entitled to. The same observations will, in some measure, apply to other shaving soaps. If the lather is worked up till it is thick, it will not soften the beard—it should be applied to the face as thin as possible, and if the soap is good, it will be thick enough to stand till this operation is finished, and if it should be found to be too much so, it is easily remedied by again dipping the brush in the water and applying it to the face, without using any more soap.

There are, however, shaving soaps made by some of the most respectable perfumers, which very nearly resemble Naples soap, and the qualities of which are little inferior to that article. If any of these are used, the brush must be applied in the same way for mixing the lather that I have advised for Naples soap.

But lather produced from any soap, however good it may be, will be of little service unless it is *rubbed in well* so as to soften the roots of the beard; for if the beard be long, the soap will not get down to the roots unless a sufficient time is allowed for lathering properly; and as the razor comes in contact with that part only, which is nearest the skin, the necessity of attending to this rule needs but little argument to support it.

I have thus put the reader in possession of every method which is adopted for shaving, stropping, honing, &c., and pointed out the best of each; I have now only to request the reader's attention to the recommendations this little book contains, and trust that the advice given will be followed. Let but a fair trial be afforded, and the writer need not fear the result. To those who have been suffering much inconvenience from bad razors, or ignorant of the proper way of using and preserving the edge of good ones, I would say follow my instructions to the very letter, and you will find yourselves relieved.

p/n Nov/92

In a short time will be Published, by the same Author,

“ A TREATISE ON THE HUMAN HAIR.”

